

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense, Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write to request your consideration of a posthumous promotion of Ulysses S. Grant to the grade of “General of the Armies of the United States.”

April 27, 2022, will mark President Grant’s 200th birthday. Grant answered the call to protect and defend the United States and our Constitution, at a time of national division. It is both necessary, and appropriate, to properly honor his achievements as a strong American military leader, who respected the essential role of civilian leadership, on his bicentennial.

Throughout the American Civil War, Grant commanded over 620,000 soldiers and forced more Confederate army surrenders than any other Union commander.¹ When President Lincoln made his 1861 proclamation calling for volunteers to protect the Union, Ulysses S. Grant rejoined the military and helped recruit and train volunteer soldiers.² Soon after, Grant rose to command the Union’s first major victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson and continued on to achieve pivotal, strategic victories at Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga. These achievements led President Lincoln to declare Grant as “the most extraordinary man in command that I know of,” and promote Grant to Lieutenant General of the U.S. Army, the rank held by George Washington during the Revolutionary War.³ After this promotion, Grant took control of the entire U.S. Army, and led Union soldiers to victories in the Wilderness Campaign, the Petersburg Campaign, and eventually the total surrender of Confederate forces at Appomattox. In honor and recognition of Grant’s efforts during the Civil War, Congress approved the appointment of Grant to the grade of “General of the Army of the United States” in July 1866.⁴

In October 1976, Congress enacted Public Law 94-479, which re-established the grade of “General of the Armies of the United States” to posthumously request the appointment of George Washington to this grade. Public Law 94-479 also made clear that this grade has “precedence over all other grades of the Army, past or present,” effectively lowering the grade to which Grant was appointed in 1866.⁵ We have introduced bipartisan, bicameral legislation requesting the

¹ Grady McWhiney and Perry Jamieson. 1984. *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage*. The University of Alabama Press.

² Ron Chernow. 2017. *Grant*. Penguin Press.

³ Rufus Rockwell Wilson. 1945. *Intimate Memories of Lincoln*. The Primavera Press, Inc.

⁴ Jean Edward Smith. 2001. *Grant*. Simon & Schuster.

⁵ 94th Congress. October 11, 1976. Public Law 94-479.

posthumous promotion of Ulysses S. Grant to the grade of “General of the Armies of the United States.”⁶ While 10 U.S.C. § 1563 gives your office the authority to make honorary promotions, this statute limits such promotions to not exceed the grade of Major General. However, we think it is necessary that the Department of Defense provide input and consideration as part of this effort.

We request your office review Ulysses S. Grant’s military record and make a determination as to the merits of a posthumous promotion to General of the Armies of the United States. Upon completion, please inform our offices, as well as the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, of your determination. We appreciate your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

⁶ 117th Congress. September 14, 2021. H.J.Res. 58; 117th Congress. September 22, 2021. S.J.Res. 26.